DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 180 865 SO 012 197

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TITLE "Masculinity, Femininity, Achievement Conflicts and Health."
PUB DATE [79]
NOTE 13p.: Paper presented at Annual Convertion of the American Psychological Association (New York, NY, September 3, 1979)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Achievement: Androgyny: Competition: Fear of Success: *Females: Individual Psychology: *Males: Mental Health: *Motivation: *Psychological Characteristics: Self Actualization: Sex Differences: Social Science Research: *Success Factors: *Work Attitudes

ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is to measure achievement motivation in terms of psychological masculinity and femininity rather than in terms of biological gender. The terms, psychological masculinity and femininity, refer to sets of characteristics desirable for both sexes. Masculine characteristics include independence, self-confidence, competitiveness, and activeness: feminine traits are gentleness, helpfulness, warmth, and understanding. One hundred eighty-five students at New York University completed measures of masculinity, femininity, achievement motivation, a psychosomatic symptom checklist, and questions assessing the quality of relationships with family and friends. Academic transcripts were also made available. Four components of achievement motivation were measured: mastery (striving to meet internal standards of excellence), work (the desire to work hard and keep busy), competitiveness, and personal unconcern (an unconcern with the reaction of others toward achievement). Results indicate that mastery and competitiveness are related to masculinity, and work is related to both masculinity and femininity. In addition, males scored significantly higher than females on competiveness: the absence of masculinity is associated with feelings of self-doubt: competitive females were more likely to irrational fears and self-doubts: masculine women performed better in college than their less masculine counterparts: and fear of success is associated with absence of masculinity for both sexes. (Author/KC)

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"Masculinity, Femininity, Achievement Conflicts and Health"

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Horner's (1968, 1972) research on women's fear of success focused attention on some important consequences of American sex role definitions. Unfortunately, serious methodological problems have been identified in her work (e.g., Tresemer, 1977; Zuckerman & Wheeler, 1975), and this seems to have detered further research in this area. One of the most common criticisms concerns the projective measurement of achievement motivation and fear of success. Not only are projective measures generally unreliable (Nunnally, 1978), but Horner's TAT-like measure has failed to correlate consistently with objective measures of fear of success (Sadd, Lenauer, Shaver & Donivant, 1978; Shaver, personal communication; Tresemer, 1977), suggesting problems of construct validity as well.

Horner's (1974) work was part of the program of research on achievement motivation initiated years ago by McClelland and Atkinson (e.g., McClelland, Atkinson, Clark, & Lowell, 1953). Researchers in this tradition treat achievement motivation (n Ach) as a unitary construct, a practice which has been criticized recently (Jackson, Ahmed, & Heapy, 1976; Spence & Helmreich, 1978). The unidimensional approach to achievement motivation may be too simplistic to account for achievement behavior in real-life settings and may be obscuring important relationships between components of achievement motivation

SP012197

This paper was presented at the Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association, New York City, September 3, 1979. The research reported here was facilitated by a grant from the Spencer Foundation to Phillip Shaver.

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and other personality variables. Spence and Helmreich (1978) have suggested for instance, that achievement motivation includes needs for mastery work, and competitiveness.

While Horner established a theoretical connection between fear of success and sex-role norms, her research has not directly incorporated masculinity and femininity. It seems likely, as Peplau (1976) has suggested, that direct measures of variables such as sex-role traditionalism would be more helpful than the TAT measure of fear of success has been in contributing to a model of achievement motivation and conflict suitable for both sexes.

Recently, Spence and Helmreich (1978), working at the University of Texas, and Sadd and her colleagues at NYU (Sadd et al., 1978) have developed sets of objective measures designed to address one or more of the problems I have mentioned. These measures include: (1) Spence and Helmreich's Work and Family Orientation Questionnaire, a four-factor measure of achievement motivation; (2) their Personal Attributes Questionnaire, a measure of masculinity and femininity; and (3) Sadd et al.'s two-factor measure of achievement conflicts. Since the research I will report today focuses on relationships among these measures, I would like to describe them briefly.

Spence and Helmreich (1978)*

Spence and Helmreich hypothesized that achievement motivation

*I refer here to Spence and Helmreich's 1978 book, Masculinity and Femininity, because it is the most complete account of their reasoning and research. Their measures have been slightly revised since the book was written, however. For the study reported here I used the third version of the Work and Family Orientation Questionnaire described in Helmreich and Spence (1978).

was a multi-dimensional phenomenon. Following several factor-analytic studies they have settled on the following four components of achievement motivation: Mastery (striving to meet internal standards of excellence), Work (the desire to work hard and keep busy), Competitiveness (the desire to surpass others), and Personal Unconcern (an unconcern with the reactions of others toward achievement). The Personal Unconcern scale, when reversed is . conceptually similar to fear of success.

Spence and Helmreich's Personal Attributes Questionnaire (or PAQ) is based on a dualistic or two-factor conception of masculinity and femininity. According to the dualistic conception, masculinity and femininity are two independent dimensions rather than opposite poles of a single dimension. The correlation between the two scales has been consistently found to be low and positive, usually near zero. Masculinity is a set of characteristics which are considered to be socially desirable for both sexes but more common in males. Items from the PAQ masculinity scale include: independent, self-confident, competitive and active. Femininity is a set of characteristics considered to be socially desirable for both sexes but more common in females. PAQ examples include: gentle, helpful, warm, and understanding. Spence and Helmreich use the two scales to define four classes of individuals. Masculine subjects are those who score above the median on Masculinity and below the median on Femininity. Feminine subjects score above the median on Femininity and below the median on Masculinity. Androgynous subjects score above the

median on both scales; subjects who score below the median on both scales are classified as Undifferentiated.

On the basis of several studies, Spence and Helmreich (1978) have concluded that individual differences in achievement motivation are better explained in terms of psychological masculinity and femininity than in terms of biological gander. Significant positive correlations are generally found, for both sexes, between masculinity scores and achievement scores on each of the four WOFO factors. Weaker positive relationships were found between femininity and the achievement scales---except Competitiveness, which correlated slightly negatively with femininity.

Sadd et al. (1978)

Sadd et al.'s measures of achievement conflicts were derived by factor analyzing eight objectively scored fear of success and fear of failure scales. Five highly stable orthogonal factors were obtained. I used two of her scales, fear of success and self-deprecation and insecurity. "Fear of Success " (FOS) reflects concern about jealousy, exploitation, responsibility, and pressure following success. "Self-Deprecation and Insecurity" (SDI) is characterized by items describing failure to live up to one's standards, self-consciousness. unassertiveness, and behavioral manifestations of insecurity. Sadd and her colleagues suggest that Factor 1 and Factor 2 are measures of fear of success and fear of failure, respectively.

The study I will discuss today was designed to examine some of the issues raised by Spence and Helmreich and Sadd et al. concerning achievement motivation and achievement conflicts. Specifically, I was interested in the following questions:

(1) Are the WOFO achievement motivation components, Mastery, Work, Competitiveness, and Personal Unconcern, related to masculinity and femininity rather than gender?

(2) Are the achievement conflict components identified by Sadd et al., FOS and SDI, significantly related to masculinity and femininity?

(3) How are masculinity, femininity, and the WOFO achievement motivation components related to academic performance and health?

(4) How do masculinity femininity, and competitiveness relate to achievement conflicts? Can some of Horner's (1968) original insights be operationalized in these terms rather than in terms of a projectively measured fear of success?

Data were collected in one of NYU's large dormitories. One hundred eighty-five upper-level students were paid $5.00 each to complete Spence and Helmreich's measures of masculinity, femininity, and achievement motivation; Sadd et al.'s FOS and SDI scales; a psychosomatic symptom checklist; and a series of questions assessing the quality of past and present relationships with family members and friends. The students also made their academic transcripts available to me. The Symptom Checklist required subjects to report how much they had been bothered during the previous year by such

problems and symptoms as headaches, sleep disturbances, ulcers, chest pains, poor appetite, and nightmares. From each student's transcript, I constructed various performance indices besides grade point average; these included major grade point average, grade range and variability, the number of incompletes and withdrawals (corrected for number of semesters completed).

I will discuss the results as they bear on each of the questions I've outlined. (For a more detailed presentation of the data, see Olds and Shaver, in press.)

(1) Masculinity, Femininity, and Achievement Motivation

The results provide substantial support for Spence and Helmreich's contentions. Analyses of variance revealed that differences in achievement motivation were in fact due to masculinity and femininity rather than gender. Androgynous and Masculine subjects scored higher than Feminine and Undifferentiated subjects on Mastery; thus Mastery is related to masculinity. On the Work factor, Androgynous, Feminine, and Masculine subjects scored significantly higher than Undifferentiated subjects, indicating that both masculinity and femininity are associated with Work. Finally, Masculine subjects scored significantly higher than Feminine and Undifferentiated subjects on Competitiveness.

One important sex difference emerged. Males scored significantly higher than females on Competitiveness and this difference remained significant even when masculinity scores were partialled. Thus the difference cannot be explained simply in terms of masculinity.

Correlational analyses revealed a strong positive correlation between masculinity and competitiveness for men, but not for women. Moreover, masculine women described themselves as significantly more sensitive and less competitive than masculine men did. In short, masculinity did not have identical forms in males and females, and the differences had to do with competitiveness.

(2) Masculinity, Femininity, and Achievement Conflicts

For both males and females , masculinity correlated negatively with achievement conflict measures (FOS and SDI). Feminine and Undifferentiated subjects scored significantly higher on self-deprecation and insecurity than the Masculine subjects did, again indicating that absence of masculinity is associated with feelings of self-doubt and insecurity about achievement. (This entire pattern of results perfectly replicates findings obtained by Sadd, Miller and Zeitz, 1979).

(3) Performance and Health

For both males and females reports of mental and physical problems during the past year were correlated negatively with masculinity and positively with femininity. Interestingly, feminine males and feminine females did not report the same problems. For males, femininity was associated with nausea, constipation, guilt, and nightmares---especially with nightmares. For females, femininity correlated positively with feeling tired and crying easily, but not at all with the problems reported by feminine males.

Of all the WOFO achievement motivation factors, only Competitiveness in females correlated positively with problems and symptoms. Females who were competitive were more likely than their less competitive counterparts to cry easily, have irrational fears, and feel guilty. No such relationships were found for males.

Very few variables correlated significantly with academic performance. For females, masculinity was significantly related to grade point average and inversely related to performance variability. That is, the more masculine women were performing better in college than their less masculine countarparts.

Two significant correlations were found between achievement motivation and performance. For females, Work was associated with high grade point average and Personal Unconcern was associated with fewer academic incompletes and withdrawals. When all subjects were broken into eight groups based on median splits of Work, Mastery, and Competitiveness scores, Work and Competitiveness interacted to predict grade point average but no other interactions were significant. Subjects high in Work and low in Competitiveness obtained the highest grade point average. Spence and Helmreich's group has found the same pattern in studies of undergraduates, graduate business students, and professional research scientists (Helmreich & Spence, 1977; Helmreich, Spence, Beane, Lucker, & Matthews, Note 1). Thus, for a wide range of samples, the most desirable combination of traits could be characterized as competence without competitiveness.

(4) Sex-roles Competitiveness and Achievement Conflicts

Our results support some of Horner's (1968 1972) reasoning Achievement conflicts were found to be associated with the absence of masculinity for both sexes. Thus fear of success as Horner measured it may have been due to an absence of what Spence and Helmreich call masculine traits Since there are more "masculine" males than "masculine" females this could account for the sex differences in Horner's (1968) study In my sample "masculine" women were academically competent and were not much bothered by achievement conflicts or health problems. Still they described themselves as relatively sensitive and noncompetitive It seems likely that competitiveness in women is still proscribed by American sex-role norms even though other components of "masculinity" are becoming acceptable traits in women The fact that competitive females have more stress symptoms than noncompetitive females supports this inference All other aspects of masculinity seem to promote success and health in females

The emergence of competitiveness as a central factor in explaining differences between males and females in this study exemplifies the advantages of Spence and Helmreich's multi-dimensional conception of achievement motivation It seems likely that most of the issues raised by Horner can be studied more precisely with Spence and Helmreich's measures than with a projective measure of fear of success.

In closing I would like to mention one more result from my study which reinforces conclusions reached by other panel members If Sadd et al 's FOS scale measures fear of success and their SDI scale measures a form of fear of failure each of these should interact with academic performance to affect health but the interactions should be in opposite directions. A person who is anxious about success should be uncomfortable if he or she is doing well in school, while a person who fears failure should be distressed if he or she is performing poorly. The two interactions in question were tested using grade point average as the measure of performance. The interaction with SDI was significant and in the predicted direction, but the interaction with FOS was neither significant nor in the predicted direction. Therefore there is no evidence in this study that FOS actually measures fear of success

This failure of construct validity presents another reason for pursuing Horner's (1968) provocative ideas about sex differences with a multi-dimensional set of measures We are now fairly certain about the correlates and consequences of sex-role norms such as the ones that discourage women from being competitive We are much less certain about the meaning of the vague general concept of fear of success. It would be a shame to discard a host of genuine theoretical and political issues along with a single misleading concept

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